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# U.S. Support to Iraqi Women

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*"It is clear that the women of Iraq have a critical role to play in the future revival of their society. They bring skills and knowledge that will be vital to restoring Iraq to its rightful place in the region and in the world."*

*Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky*

**Information compiled by  
The Information Resource Center  
Embassy of the United States of America**

**March 8, 2006**

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## **Introduction**

The Information Resource Center (IRC) of the Embassy of the United States in Madrid has prepared this information packet.

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## 1. USAID Support to Iraqi Women.

*With the help of USAID's capacity building activities, Iraqi women have strengthened their political voice and continue to improve their economic status. USAID partners have worked with female politicians both local and national, journalists, and NGOs that advocate women's interests. Programs support women entrepreneurs, business leaders, employees, and professionals to ensure they benefit from increased economic growth and increased public and private sector capacity building. USAID continues to educate Iraqi men and women about the importance of securing equal rights for all Iraqis.*

Iraq's 1970 constitution made Iraqi women nominally equal with men, guaranteeing them the right to vote, hold political office, and work outside of the home. However, this legislation was frequently not enforced and by 1990, laws protecting women were repealed. Despite active discrimination, Iraqi women still struggled to participate in the workforce, earn and education, and remain political sphere. This provides a ready context for renewed support for women's rights and their increased participation in society.

### Accomplishments

**Economic Growth.** USAID programs support Iraqi women as entrepreneurs, employees, business leaders, and professionals. Nearly 60 percent of the small business development grants administered by USAID in the reconstruction effort have been awarded to women. The newly-formed Iraq Investment Promotion Agency (IIPA) is composed entirely of women trained in economic development and investment promotion. A grant for nearly \$1.3 million is being finalized for a women-focused international Micro Finance Institute, combining loans with one-on-one technical assistance to develop business ideas.

**Democracy and Governance.** USAID partners are working with female politicians in the Iraqi National Assembly (INA), female journalists, and community organizations that advocate for women's interests, training them on gender concepts and analysis, advocacy efforts, and developing legislative platforms. An *Engendering the Constitution Committee*, including members of government and NGOs, was organized by a USAID partner to ensure the inclusion of women's rights in the draft constitution. Since the Constitutional Referendum, the Committee has transformed itself into The National Coalition to continue to advocate for women's rights in the legal arena. They came to an agreement on a 10-point statement on women rights they wanted included in the draft constitution and conducted a successful advocacy campaign. To assist in the advocacy effort, a Popular Guide to Women and the Constitution was published in both Arabic and Kurdish and distributed throughout Iraq.

**Elections.** USAID's efforts to promote women's participation as elected government officials contributed to Iraqi women securing 31 percent of the seats in the INA in the January 30, 2005 elections. In addition, thousands of women were among the nearly 10,000 elections monitors trained by USAID partners in preparation for the elections.

**Women and Governance.** USAID's Local Governance Program (LGP) has actively recruited and trained women to serve on governorate, municipal, and neighborhood advisory councils throughout Iraq. The program also works with city councils to design and implement projects that meet the needs of women in their communities. Finally, the LGP enhances the advocacy skills of

women by providing them with training and advice in media relations, advocacy campaigning and communications.

**Education.** USAID's education programs are tailored to enhance the enrollment of girls in school, reduce the substantial gender gap in primary school enrolment, and increasing girl's literacy in rural areas. USAID's accelerated learning program condenses six years of primary school into three years, giving girls the opportunity to receive a primary school education. Girls learn life skills and gain the academic background necessary to return to formal schooling. USAID is also rehabilitating the water and sanitation facilities at 800 primary schools, and improving female teachers and administrators through training programs that will reach about 75,000 women by the end of 2005-2006 school year.

Source: <a href="http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/women.html">http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/women.html</a>
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## **2. U.S. Supports Advancement of Women in the Middle East. September 6, 2005.**

### **State Department issues fact sheet outlining U.S. efforts**

Following is a fact sheet, issued by the State Department September 6, outlining U.S. efforts to support the political, economic and educational advancement of women in the Middle East:

Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues

Washington, DC

September 6, 2005

### **U.S. Commitment to Women in the Middle East**

"Here in the Middle East, that same long hopeful process of democratic change is now beginning to unfold. Millions of people are demanding freedom for themselves and democracy for their countries. There are those who say that democracy is for men alone. In fact, the opposite is true: Half a democracy is not a democracy. As one Muslim woman leader has said, "Society is like a bird. It has two wings. And a bird cannot fly if one wing is broken."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,

June 20, 2005 in Cairo, Egypt

As part of the United States' strong commitment to advance freedom in the Arab world, President Bush, in December 2002, launched the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). MEPI recognizes women's empowerment as one of four key pillars integral to reform in the region along with political, educational, and economic advancements. Women are full beneficiaries of programs in all of the MEPI pillars. In addition, specific programs to end barriers to full participation by women in the political and economic life of 14 countries and the Palestinian territories account for 13% of the \$293 million that the United States Congress has committed to MEPI through FY 2005 with the percentage rising in that year to 20%. Programs also reach schoolgirls through the U.S.-funded ACCESS English-language micro-scholarships (for relatively disadvantaged youth), My Arabic Library, the Jordan Education Initiative (JEI), and Student Leaders project. The projects listed below are representative of MEPI and other State Department programs for women. More information is available on the MEPI Web site <http://mepi.state.gov/>, specifically under the Women's Pillar section of the MEPI Web site: <http://mepi.state.gov/c10127.htm>. For more information about the State Department International Visitor Leadership Program Web visit <http://www.exchanges.state.gov/education/ivp/>.

### **Political Participation and Civil Society**

Regional Campaign Schools. The United States through MEPI has funded three campaign seminars that provide political leadership skills and organizational training for women seeking elective office. The International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute implement the MEPI program. The most recent regional campaign seminar for women took place in Amman, Jordan from March 28 - April 1, 2005. A total of 76 women from a cross-section of political parties in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, and West/Bank Gaza participated in the training, which covered topics including the fundamentals of modern campaigning, advanced communications skills, and political advocacy. This seminar builds on previous seminars convened in Doha, Qatar and Tunis, Tunisia, which brought together women from the Gulf and Maghreb, respectively.

Preventing Violence Against Women. Freedom House, a U.S.-based non-government organization (NGO), is building the capacity of public institutions and NGOs in Jordan, working as a coalition, to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to prevent domestic violence, sexual abuse, and honor killings. This program, recently awarded a second year of funding, will also expand the Jordanian government's awareness-raising program to promote a human rights-based approach within the judicial system.

Empowering Women's Organizations in Jordan and Egypt. With MEPI funding, the American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) and the General Union of Voluntary Societies of Jordan are working together to improve the capacity of small- to medium-sized women's community-based organizations to participate effectively in political dialogue and democratic reform. Funded by MEPI, the Center for Development and Population Activity (CEDPA) is conducting a similar program for grassroots women's organizations in four governorates in Egypt, working in partnership with the National Council of Women. The first annual Arab Women's Forum, organized by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, was held in May 2003 to discuss how to overcome obstacles faced by Arab women.

International Exchanges. The State Department's International Visitor (IV) Leadership Program hosted travel to the U.S. of hundreds of women, including NGO leaders, journalists, teachers, and government officials. Programs address a wide range of issues, such as NGO management, the role of legislators, the judiciary, the rule of law, and the role of women in business, society, and politics.

Survey of Women's Freedom. Freedom House, a U.S.-based NGO, published a comprehensive survey and analysis of the status of women's freedom in 16 countries and West Bank/Gaza in the Middle East. The English-language report was published in August 2005 and is scheduled to be translated into Arabic later in the year. The survey, for which the methodology and implementation were carefully designed and managed by a team of experts from the region, includes country reports, numerical data, and focus group research. More information is available on the Freedom House Web site: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/menasurvey/>.

## **Women and the Law**

Arab Women and the Law Workshop. MEPI and the Government of Jordan hosted a workshop in Amman on women and law in February 2004. Nearly 90 women from 16 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region gathered to discuss key issues affecting women in the legal profession and to develop plans for future collaboration. At the end of the conference, MEPI announced it would support two follow-up activities: the establishment of a regional association for women in the legal profession and a public legal education campaign on women's rights and equality. These activities are part of a 2-year, \$6.5 million joint program on the Rule of Law and Women and the Law to be implemented by the American Bar Association. More information is available on the Arab Judicial Forum Web site: <http://www.arabjudicialforum.org/>.

Women's Legal Rights in Morocco. With MEPI support, two U.S.-based NGOs, Global Rights and World Learning, are providing training to strengthen advocacy skills, develop institutional capacity, enhance legal literacy, and build outreach among organizations in different communities in Morocco, with a particular focus on the new family code, the Moudawana. In addition, a series of 40 theatrical representations has been presented throughout Morocco to sensitize rural and urban women -- and men -- about reforms to the new Moroccan family code, the Moudawana. Funded by MEPI, Moroccan NGOs use this format to inform citizens about greater protections for women and children and new prohibitions on polygamy.

## **Economic Opportunities for Women**

Business Internship Program for Young Middle Eastern Women. Based on the successes of the initial 2004 internship program for over 40 women from the Middle East, MEPI is arranging the second program to begin in November 2005 for another 40 women. Last year's program, conducted with the Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), included a month-long academic program at Duke University and Emory University followed by 3-month internships at Fortune 500 companies, law firms, and small- and medium-size companies. The program provided the young professionals the opportunity to acquire management and business skills and to learn more about the United States. For more information, please see the Economic Pillar <http://www.mepi.state.gov/>.

Business Women's Summit. Over 200 women entrepreneurs attended a Business Women's Summit in Tunis, Tunisia, May 24-26, 2005. Several leading American businesswomen attended and volunteered their time to lead sessions on management and leadership skills to the Middle Eastern women who represented 16 countries and the Palestinian territories. There was also high-level participation from top U.S. officials including, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, and Ex-Im Bank Vice Chair, April Foley.

MEET-U.S. The Middle East Entrepreneur Training program (MEET-U.S.) is specifically designed to provide skills training, professional networking, and alumni support systems to increase managerial and entrepreneurial skills and the number of voices championing a larger role for the private sector in Arab economies. Of the 45 Information and Communication Technology and Business Services sector professionals who attended the three-week entrepreneurship training in San Diego, California in February and March 2005, 19 were women. Trainees in the Middle East Entrepreneurship Training (MEET-U.S.) program participated in two-day internships with local businesses during their stay. Previous sessions in June 2003, and September 2003 were conducted for hospital administration and women entrepreneurs.

## **Educational and Women's Awareness Programs**

Rural Girls' Education. With the goal of keeping rural girls in school through the middle grades, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched and supported a local NGO in Morocco (the Comité de Soutien à la Scolarisation des Filles (CSSF), or the Rural Girls' Educational Support Committee. Through continued support by MEPI, CSSF and Moroccan NGOs will establish five new homes in addition to the 14 currently in existence -- to ensure that the girls have safe and culturally acceptable living quarters near their school during a three-year period. MEPI will provide school supplies for 400 girls over the next three years.

Outreach to Saudi Women. The State Department has offered extensive teacher training for Saudi women over the past several years, and has hosted an educational research-focused International Visitor (IV) Leadership Program for six Saudi women leaders. The U.S. Embassy in Riyadh works closely with women journalists and two private Women's Colleges in Jeddah.

### **Partnerships With Other Programs**

There are numerous joint programs through which the United States and MEPI partners support women throughout the wider Middle East. Some examples include: Political Training. In Kuwait, the U.S.-Middle East Democracy Fund is sponsoring a program to train women activists to develop strategies for obtaining political rights for women, including the right to vote and run for elected office. The MEPI program in Kuwait was organized through the RIGHTS consortium with National Democratic Institute.

Media Training. Internews, a U.S.-based media training NGO, provided 40 Jordanian, Palestinian, and Saudi journalists classes on journalism ethics, such as accuracy, objectivity, and balanced reporting. MEPI is also planning to work with Arab women news commentators and journalists to develop programs and productions to highlight women's issues and history.

International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). The Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' (ECA) brought to the U.S. 14 Iraqi public- and private-sector women leaders for a program on "Women's Leadership and Advocacy" in the summer of 2005. This Leadership Program regularly organizes programs, both regional and country-specific, dedicated to the promotion of Arab women as leaders in the public and private sectors. It is bringing seven professional women from Syria's small but growing civil society sector to the U.S. in August 2005 and seven young Egyptian women to the U.S. in September 2005. This program will also bring 12 women entrepreneurs from the Middle East to the U.S. in August 2005 to learn about business and economic development. In addition to giving the women educational, political, and entrepreneurship training, programs have focused on the role of women in American politics, business, and society and provided an overview of constitutional and other legal safeguards that protect the rights of women.

Health Care. USAID funds the Forty-Day Program to provide postpartum care to mothers and infants in Tunisia, Jordan, and the West Bank. Safe Motherhood and Child Survival programs provide antenatal and postpartum care, safe delivery, and treatment of obstetric complications to women in Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, and Morocco. To date, USAID has invested about \$20 million to implement this program in 51 hospitals and 182 primary health care facilities in Egypt. This support to the Government of Egypt's neonatal and safe motherhood programs established essential obstetric care and neonatal services in public hospitals in nine Upper Egypt governorates. The Healthy Mother/Healthy Child project involves upgrading delivery and operating rooms, as well as neonatal units of general and district hospitals, where women are admitted with life threatening emergencies related to childbirth.

In West Bank/Gaza, USAID puts a priority on the emergency and daily health and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable Palestinians -- mothers and children. USAID funds programs to improve the health of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian mothers and their children. USAID projects have upgraded and equipped more than 80 health clinics, distributed essential medicines to 150 health facilities and, in FY 2004, trained health care providers to educate women on birth spacing, family planning and well-baby care. Another 108,000 women living in isolated communities received health education kits explaining danger signs during pregnancy, newborn care, breastfeeding, and nutrition.

During the summer of 2005, a group of Syrian nurses took part in an ECA Leadership Program that demonstrated how to develop a standard of care for psychiatric nursing, how the diversity of mental illness is handled in the U.S., and what constitutes a manageable caseload.

Life Skills. New Horizons is a life skills program for girls and young women in Egypt who are not enrolled in the formal education system. The results of the program include an increase in health, education, and community participation of its participants. There is also a similar program for in-school boys and young men. To date, 22,884 girls and young women in Upper Egypt have received scholarships and training from this USAID-supported program.

Microcredit Programs. Since 1996, the United States, through USAID-supported programs, has granted more than 60,000 loans worth over \$24 million to Palestinian women and entrepreneurs.

These programs have helped thousands of Palestinian women to transform their subsistence labor into sustainable, income-generating enterprises. Microcredit programs for women have proven to be wise investments with an average repayment rate of over 90%, and, as a result, Palestinian banks are accepting more female loan applicants.

Through support of the Jordan Micro Credit Company, USAID-supported microfinance activities have changed the lives of thousands of Jordanians, especially women, who account for 82% of all clients. Together, four micro finance institutions in Jordan have provided over 90,000 loans -- 85% of which are to women -- to over 49,000 borrowers, with a total cumulative value of approximately \$48.8 million.

Women's Functional Literacy. Through support from USAID, CARE Yemen will work with local communities to develop functional literacy programs designed to help women in agricultural production, savings and loan clubs, environmental management, maternal and child health (including HIV/AIDS awareness), political participation, and women's rights. Helen Keller International has provided literacy training to 20,000 women in southern Morocco. The project then shows women how to apply their new literacy skills.

Marketing Natural Foods in Lebanon. USAID supports a training program in natural food preservation techniques and marketing. The program enables rural women to capitalize on traditional food production and preservation methods. To date, 623 women have been trained in quality, hygienic food processing techniques. Now 32 groups transform surplus, low-value agricultural produce into a wide-variety of 100 percent natural products for some of Lebanon's most upscale supermarkets and specialty shops around the world.

Source: <a href="http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Sep/07-499590.html">http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Sep/07-499590.html</a>
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### **3. United States Supports Women's Empowerment in Iraq. August 15, 2005.**

#### **State Department fact sheet outlines U.S. programs for Iraqi women**

Following is a State Department fact sheet outlining the state of women's rights in Iraq and describing U.S. efforts to support women's empowerment:

[U.S. Department of State]

Office of International Women's Issues

August 15, 2005

Fact Sheet

U.S. Support for Women in Iraq

"Human rights are defined by a constitution; they're defended by an impartial rule of law; they're secured in a pluralistic society. The advance of women's rights and the advance of liberty are ultimately inseparable."

President George W. Bush

Efforts to Globally Promote Women's Human Rights, March 12, 2004

Background

Since Iraq's liberation, the United States has actively supported the needs and interests of Iraqi women, seeking to provide them with the necessary tools to permit their full participation in their country's political, social, and economic future. With support from Congress, the Administration has worked closely with the representatives of the Interim and Transitional governments of Iraq, as well as local Iraqi civic partners, to establish programs designed to promote the equal participation of women and protection of women's rights.

-- Of the 40 Cabinet-level Ministerial positions, six are held by women.

-- Of the 275 seats in the Transitional National Assembly (TNA), 87 seats (or 31 percent) are held by women.

-- Under Article 31 of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), electoral laws aimed to achieve the goal of having women constitute no less than one-quarter of the TNA.

-- Of the 71 members of the TNA's Constitutional Drafting Committee, 11 are women.

The United States funds government initiatives and NGOs that support Iraqi women, such as a public education campaign on the constitution, Fulbright scholarships, and assistance in the economic, social and political spheres.

#### **Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative**

The Department's \$10-million Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative (IWDI) was announced in March 2004 and provides skills in key areas, including education for democracy, leadership training, political training, teaching, coalition-building, organizational management, entrepreneurship, and media training.

-- The Office of International Women's Issues (G/IWI) and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) are responsible for the IWDI. Since last September, seven major grantees have been conducting extensive training programs in Iraq, thus far training some 2,000 women.



-- With IWDI funds, the new Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Dr. Azhar al-Sheikhly, who has a Ph.D. in constitutional law, received training under a U.S. grant and was recently able to lead a delegation of Iraqi women lawyers to the United States for a week of focused training on legal and constitutional issues and meetings with the Executive Branch and Members of Congress.

-- In February and March of 2005, IWDI funds were used to support a delegation of Iraqi women leaders, led by the former Minister for Women's Affairs, Narmeen Othman, to participate in the proceedings of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women and in the events of International Women's Day events with the First Lady and the Secretary of State.

-- In June 2005, IWDI funds supported the participation of seven Iraqi women leaders in the Global Summit for Women in Mexico.

-- The U.S.-Iraq Women's Network and the Iraqi Women's Gift fund, which are public/private partnerships, have been created to build more support for Iraqi women in the U.S.

#### Economic and Social Support

-- The USAID Private Sector Development Office reaches out to women in the business and agriculture communities by providing both capacity building training and financial resources. A vocational training and employment services project has been started with women as a primary focus. A new business grants program began in February 2005, with the goal of awarding 30 percent of its grants to women.

-- USAID's Iraq Civil Society Program (ICSP), which provides technical assistance to Iraqi NGOs, has provided specific support to Iraqi NGOs working in support of women's rights. In March 2005, the ICSP conducted training sessions for Iraqi NGOs to educate them about the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its applicability in Iraq.

-- The American Bar Association (ABA), under the USAID Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, conducts training programs and foreign study visits to increase the knowledge and capacity of NGOs and government officials regarding gender-related legislation. In March 2005, ABA held a conference in Jordan to facilitate a dialogue between NGOs and the Minister of State for Women's Affairs on the role of gender in the Iraqi constitution and law.

-- Thus far, the USAID's Women's Party Advancement Program, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), has provided leadership training for more than 180 women from several political parties. This training has included sessions on how to promote internal transparency, overcome lack of experience in politics, and how to operate effectively within a political party.

#### Educational Support

-- The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has funded 17 Iraqi women on Fulbright Scholarships in the social sciences, public administration, law, business, and public health fields over the past two years and selected six young Iraqi women to participate in the Bureau's "YES" Youth Exchange Program to attend a U.S. high school and live with an American host family in the 2005/6 academic year.

-- 60 Iraqi women participated in a number of regional, multi-regional, and single country International Visitor Leadership (IVL) and Voluntary Visitor Programs in English language teaching, civic education, civil society development, democracy and governance, women's



leadership, NGO management, education and journalism fields. An additional eight women are scheduled to take part in the IVL program before the end of this fiscal year.

"There are those who say that democracy is for men alone. In fact, the opposite is true: Half a democracy is not a democracy. As one Muslim woman leader has said, "Society is like a bird. It has two wings. And a bird cannot fly if one wing is broken."

-- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Remarks at the American University in Cairo,  
Cairo, Egypt, June 20, 2005

Source: <a href="http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Aug/15-797327.html">http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Aug/15-797327.html</a>
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#### **4. United States Committed to Helping Women in Iraq. June 22, 2005.**

United States Committed to Helping Women in Iraq  
State Department recaps U.S. efforts to assist Iraqi women

Following is a fact sheet released June 22 by the Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues of the State Department detailing ways the United States is carrying out its commitment to helping the women of Iraq:

Fact Sheet  
Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues  
Washington, DC  
June 22, 2005

##### **U.S. Commitment to Women in Iraq**

"All of us were impressed by the high voter turnout in Iraq. Each ink-stained finger belonged to a man or a woman who defied suicide bombers, mortar attacks and threats of beheading to exercise a basic right as a citizen."

-- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, February 8, 2005

On January 30, 2005, more than 8 million Iraqi people went to the polls in historic national elections, 18 provincial elections, and the Kurdistan Regional government election. A 275-member Transitional National Assembly (TNA), which is charged with the responsibility of drafting a new constitution, was elected to serve as Iraq's national legislature for a transition period. Women occupy 31% of the seats. Women also lead the ministries of Displacement and Migration, Telecommunications, Municipalities and Public Works, Environment, Science and Technology, as well as, Women's Affairs.

The United States remains firmly committed to the political, economic, and social reconstruction of Iraq. As part of the approximately \$21 billion in U.S. funding for Iraqi reconstruction in 2003 and 2004, the United States allocated nearly half a billion dollars to support democracy-building programs in Iraq -- including projects that specifically help women with democratic organization and advocacy. U.S. Government-sponsored programs are helping Iraqi women develop in areas from literacy, computer, and vocational training to human rights education. Micro-credit facilities and workshops are helping aspiring Iraqi businesswomen, and additional funds are improving women's access to quality health care.

The U.S. democracy programs helped Iraqi women prepare for the elections. Through grants funded by the U.S. State Department's \$10 million Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provided training in political leadership, communications, and coalition-building skills to many of the women members of the National Assembly. These grants also provided the funding for voter education. Since early February, training has focused on constitution drafting, legal reform, and the legislative process. Over 2000 Iraqi women already have been trained in political, economic and media skills under this Initiative.

In addition to the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative, the State Department created a U.S.-Iraq Women's Network (USIWN). The USIWN is a public-private partnership to forge links between U.S. and Iraqi women's organizations and to match private sector resources with critical needs on

the ground. The grants-based Initiative benefits women in key areas: political organization and leadership, coalition-building, democracy education, media outreach and entrepreneurship.

### **Political Participation and Civil Society**

**Political Workshops for Women:** The United States is committed to the equal participation of women in shaping the new political landscape of Iraq. The Department of State and its partners sponsor political workshops and related programs for Iraqi women through the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative and other programs, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored grants to a 400-member NGO in southern Iraq to organize a series of seminars designed to increase women's participation in political, economic, and cultural activities.

**The Transitional Administrative Law (TAL):** The TAL, signed in March 2004, set out the basic rights of all the people of Iraq and marked an historic step toward achieving a democratic Iraq. Among other rights, the TAL guarantees that:

All Iraqis are equal in their rights without regard to gender, sect, opinion, belief, nationality, religion, or origin, and they are equal before the law. Discrimination against an Iraqi citizen on the basis of his gender, nationality, religion, or origin is prohibited. Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the security of his person. No one may be deprived of his life or liberty, except in accordance with legal procedures. All are equal before the courts.

### **Economic Opportunity**

**Agricultural Training:** The United States provided a grant to an agricultural services center in southern Iraq to provide 6 ten-day training sessions on modern agricultural methods to 240 women. Grants and technical assistance to agricultural NGOs help improve agricultural methods and provide employment. Over 465 women now have jobs and 440 women have increased their family income.

**Textile Factory:** A grant from USAID's Iraqi Transition Initiative is helping to renovate a textile factory in south central Iraq that is run by over 200 women from lower income families. This assistance will improve the factory's work environment, increase production, and provide a venue for democracy-related training sessions for local women.

**Entrepreneurial Training:** In June 2005, the US Department of State helped Iraqi women participate in the Global Summit for Women in Mexico City where they met 800 other women entrepreneurs.

### **Healthcare**

**Women's Mobile Teams:** USAID is working with Women's Mobile Teams to increase rural women's access to information to improve their health and security. The curriculum includes information about domestic violence, its causes and how to combat it, crisis intervention, landmine awareness, Islam and democracy, and family-care education.

**Facilities:** The United States has rehabilitated over 110 primary health facilities and procured equipment for over 600 health centers.

**Vaccinations and Nutrition:** In the first year of Iraq's liberation, more than 3 million children under the age of five were vaccinated under the Expanded Immunization Program (EPI). EPI vaccines will eventually benefit 4.2 million children under the age of five. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the United States has administered the tetanus toxoid vaccine to more than 700,000 pregnant women; vaccinated more than three million children against measles, mumps, and rubella; and distributed high-protein biscuits to more than 450,000 children and 200,000 pregnant and nursing mothers.

**Training of Nurses:** A grant to the Iraqi Nursing Association supports the recruitment and training of hundreds of women nurses and the purchase of supplies.

## **Education**

**Schools:** The United States has renovated more than 3,138 schools throughout Iraq including in many cases installing or repairing sanitary facilities for girls. During the 2003-2004 school year, 44% (1,920,401) of primary and 40% (620,834) of secondary students were girls. Enrollment is lowest for girls living in rural areas, and USAID's Accelerated Learning Program will help 10,000 Iraqi students including many rural girls return to school during the 2005-2006 academic year.

**Higher Education:** USAID's Higher Education and Development (HEAD) program awarded five grants worth \$20.7 million to create partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi universities in the fields of law, public health, engineering, archeology, agriculture and general institutional and academic strengthening. The HEAD program is helping female university students, faculty and staff reintegrate with the international academic community through training, scholarships, research grants, and international conferences. Women students constitute approximately half of all participants in the USAID-supported clinical legal education program at the University of Baghdad, and almost 40 percent of the participants in recent rule of law seminars. Six women completed a course in agricultural experimental design and statistics, and seven female faculty members from an Iraqi University in the north attended a USAID-sponsored Nursing and Library Training session in Jordan. In addition, of the 25 Iraqi Fulbright finalists in 2004, 4 were women. In 2005, there will be 12 women among the 35 Iraqi Fulbright scholars.

**Teacher Training:** More than 33,000 secondary teachers and administrative staff, including more than 17,000 females, were trained in programs funded by USAID. Over the next year, up to 100,000 additional teachers and administrators will receive in-service training.

**MEPI Business Interns Program:** In 2004, Iraqi women participated in a four-month MBA program and interned at top companies in the United States. This program was offered as part of the Middle East Partnership Initiative, in conjunction with Educational and Cultural Affairs, and is being repeated in 2005.

Source: <a href="http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Jun/24-979928.html">http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Jun/24-979928.html</a>
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## **5. Women in the Iraq Reconstruction, May 2004. USAID.**

# Women in the Iraq Reconstruction

May 2004

USAID bases its Iraq Reconstruction programs on the belief that women's consent and active participation matters in politics, economic opportunity, and social settings. Since April 1, 2003, USAID focused on women's equality and empowerment through local government and civil society organizations, as these two avenues allowed the most immediate and direct impact on their lives. USAID helped build the social structures needed to support Iraq's women with increased school enrollment for girls and health programs aimed at mothers.

Reaction to explicit changes in women's roles typically occurs about a year after programs begin. This implies that civil society organizations and female leaders will be challenged in 2004 even as they move beyond their initial footholds. To support women in the second year of reconstruction, USAID programs allow for a more measured approach to women's equality. In governance, legal changes will include codifying women's rights, solidifying the role of women in government, and supporting women's civil society organizations. Economic programs which target women and give them new opportunities are also being developed.

Women's access to public services and education, participation in the work force, and involvement in decision-making varies widely in Iraq. The variables include marital status, educational attainment, socio-economic status and region. Concerns shared by Iraqi women include:

**Security:** An insecure environment, honor killings, and other gender-based violence impacts workforce participation and limits female access to health and education facilities.

**Limited political participation:** Women have been prevented from expressing their needs and advocating for issues which affect them.

**Illiteracy:** Iraqi illiteracy rates are the worst in the Arab Region, with some studies suggesting rates as high as 76.7 percent for women.

**Unemployed women:** A lack of relevant skills, technical training, and confidence leave women with limited abilities for the emerging market economy.

**Access to Health:** Iraq has a high maternal mortality rate; more than 50 percent of pregnant and lactating mothers are anemic. The fertility rate is 5.4, one of the highest in the region, which shows the critical need for proper maternal health care.

In close cooperation with Iraqi nationals and the Coalition Provisional Authority, USAID is restoring critical infrastructure, improving healthcare and education services, expanding economic opportunities, and implementing good governance.



USAID addresses women's needs in health, education, infrastructure, water and sanitation, democracy and governance, and economic growth. USAID programs are building the capacity of women to advocate for social justice, promote equality in the workplace, and engage in public policy on Iraq's democratic transition.



## Women in the Iraq Reconstruction

Special Feature

*"I have been principal of Al Fawz for years and have never received administration training," says the principal of Al-Fawz high school for girls. "I was so happy that you gave us training in our specialization. We would like to have more training in administration so I can be a better principal."*

### Increasing Opportunities for Education

USAID programs promoted education for women and girls which is essential for them to fully participate and benefit from the development of a prosperous Iraq.

In the 2003-2004 school year, female attendance increased from the pre-war rates, with 1.9 million girls in primary school (46 percent of all primary students) and 580,000 (40 percent of all secondary students) in secondary schools.

The Ministry of Education and communities rehabilitated more than 2,300 schools to ensure that students can learn in a safe environment. The work included separation of toilets and dressing rooms for girls and young women. With USAID funds, UNICEF will provide separated sanitary facilities to an additional 1,150 schools in the next year.

The Ministry of Education trained more than 33,000 teachers and administrators, which included more than 17,000 females, in new skills that will improve the quality of teaching in Iraq's classrooms.

Five higher education university partnerships allow female university students to travel internationally to other universities and participate in training and graduate studies programs.



# USAID



The principal of Al-Fawz high school (center).

### New Economic Opportunities

Women's participation in the economy is a crucial factor for Iraq's recovery. USAID's economic growth program is supporting activities which will help improve women's unemployment, lack of marketable skills, and lack of capital business.

More than 1,000 women received training in the financial, fiscal, utilities and regulatory sectors. Future programming includes training and employment services for 1.5 million Iraqi women. Training and employment programs for women and men will take place through seventeen Vocational Technical Training Centers and twenty-eight Employment Services Centers throughout Iraq.

In addition, two U.S. NGO's operate a micro-lending program that has lent \$600,000 for 300 women. The average loan size is about \$2,000 with a repayment rate of 100 percent.



A recipient of a micro-finance grant in Kirkuk

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## Women in the Iraq Reconstruction

Special Feature

### Health

Iraqi women are benefiting from the restoration of health clinics, hospitals, and laboratories. USAID assisted the Ministry of Health to renovate 52 primary health care clinics and re-equip an additional 600. High-protein rations have been given to 240,000 pregnant and nursing mothers and malnourished children during 2003. A new program is being implemented in rural areas to provide supplies and training to birthing attendants and will benefit a total of 440,000 women.

In an effort to improve the quality of care being provided to women, USAID assisted the Ministry to train primary health care providers with an emphasis on maternal and child health care. More than 700 doctors have been trained in Wasit, At' Tamim, Al Basrah, Karbala', An Najaf, Ninawa', and Dhi Qar Governorates.

### Maternal Health

A majority of Iraq's rural women receive healthcare through primary care centers or smaller sub-centers. Many births occur at home in Iraq, without skilled attendants. The lack of skilled attendants accounts for a high neonatal mortality rate and points to an urgent need to improve Iraqis health care.

### Emergency Assistance

Emergency programs in Iraq reach displaced persons, many of which are women-headed households. USAID funded U.S. NGO's that provide food, nutrition supplements, hygiene kits, blankets and cooking sets. Programs provide essential medical equipment and supplies to health facilities, support emergency chlorination of potable water and restore water and sanitation systems.



**USAID**



A midwife from a primary health care clinic in Turaba, near Al Amarah town in Hawizah marsh.

### Marshlands Restoration

The Iraq Marshlands Restoration Program aims to restore the ecosystem of the ancient southern marshes and assist national and local efforts to provide social and economic assistance to marsh dwellers. Many of these households are headed by women. Program activities target them for income and employment opportunities. Crop and livestock production, fish farming, and reconstructed wetlands will provide access and opportunities for women. The marshlands program works closely with an Iraqi NGO, the AMAR Foundation, which provides healthcare in the isolated marsh areas through clinics such as in Turaba village.



Iraqi woman working in the Marshlands.

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## Women in the Iraq Reconstruction

### Special Feature

#### Women in Local Government

USAID's Local Governance Program strengthens government institutions and supports citizens to understand their rights and responsibilities. The LGP actively recruited women to serve on provincial, municipal, and neighborhood advisory councils throughout the country. Although women members of the new advisory councils is small, their participation is first step towards effective **participation in political processes**.

In the Baghdad governorate, there are 2 to 3 women members in each of the 88 neighborhood councils and 14 district councils. In Babil, Najaf, Qadissiya, and Wassit there are between 1 to 3 women representatives in neighborhood and district councils. The representation of women in councils varies. For example, in at-Ta'mim the Provincial Council now includes 4 women out of a total of 40 council members. In Ninewah, the City Councils include 3 women out of a total 20 council members and in the provincial councils has 4 women out of 38 members.

Conferences and training helped women learn about democracy, human rights, women's legal rights, women's health issues, business marketing, micro-finance and computer skills. Women's civil society organizations that enable women to advocate for their needs at the local and national government levels are supported.

Women's participation in politics can be challenging as women in Iraq often are not encouraged to become involved. USAID works with women to gain the support of their families, communities and government representatives to allow them to participate in Iraq's political and economic sectors.



The Al Khadraa Society for Productive Families city/governorate was rehabilitated through the Community Action Program.

#### Community Action Program

The five NGOs that implement USAID's Community Action Program (CAP) provide support for women while involving them in the political process. CAP recruits women to serve on community action groups that identify critical needs and priorities. A third of the 138 community action groups in southern Iraq include women.

CAP programs have refurbished health centers and delivery rooms, purchased sewing machines and other equipment for women's associations, rehabilitated women's dormitories at universities, and refurbished youth centers which offer classes for girls.

#### Agriculture

Women have a disproportionately larger role in Iraqi rural households than in other Arab countries, due to male casualties in the Iraq war. USAID assists the Ministry of Agriculture to train women in crop and livestock production technologies, market development, financial management, business planning and rural credit, and resource management.



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## Women in the Iraq Reconstruction



Candidate Hiyaam Jassem Mohammed making a speech at the Najmeh district council (governorate) selections, January 6.

### Women's Political Participation

In Baghdad, the USAID helped form Women and Child Committees in the 9 District Advisory Councils of Amanat Baghdad to focus on women's issues within the DACs, NACs, and Interim City Advisory Council. Committee chairs meet to formulate common goals among districts, such as how to manage viable non-governmental organizations and use media and communications. The Women and Child Committees organize fortnightly panel discussions on subjects including Women and Politics and The Role of Women in Civil Society; attended by more than 1,500 women.

In Baghdad on February 26, 2004, a conference on "The Role of Women in New Iraq" was hosted by the Iraqi Foundation for Development and Democracy, a Baghdad based NGO. USAID brought over 200 women from 17 Governorates representing diverse social, educational, religious and ethnic backgrounds to share their views and concerns for the future of women in Iraq. The women opposed IGC Regulation 137, Personal Code, and helped insert Article 30(C) into the TAL, providing a quota of 25 percent for the representation of women in the Transitional National Assembly. A group of delegates visited members of the Interim Governing Council to present their concerns about the role of women in the new Iraq.

### Working with Women's Organizations

In Al Hillah, the **Independent Women's Association for Productive Families** represents over 850 women whose husbands and older sons were killed during the former regime who have consequently become the sole providers for 1,703 children and 237 elders. The women had sewed and sold garments on the local market, but after the war, their machines were stolen and the facility was vandalized. USAID provided organizational training, financial support, and 20 professional sewing machines to reinvigorate the Association.

In Sulaimaniya and Arbil, USAID assisted a conference on Women's Participation in the Workforce, in cooperation with the **Kurdish Economic Development Organization**, to assist women to join the workforce and build confidence for businesswomen. In Hillah, CPA Local Governance Teams have conducted **democracy workshops** for women leaders in the community who are active in human rights associations or women's rights organizations. The **Ninewa Team** helped integrate women entrepreneurs into the Mosul business community by creating the Mosul Men and Women Business Association.

USAID funded a train-the-trainer program on trauma counseling and community reconciliation implemented by the **Khatuzeen Center for Social Action** and the **American Kurdish Center in Arbil**. The program trained 60 trainers on skills focusing on helping individuals and communities recover from war and internal strife. In the next two years, these trainers will train 1,200 others to reach 30,000 war-affected persons.

USAID's Iraq Transition Initiative (ITI) provided institutional support to Iraqi women's organizations, such as the Mosul Women's Association, the Salah Ad Din Women's Committee, and the Independent Women's Association in Hillah. In At Ta'mim, LGP assisted the **Iraqi Women's Organization** and the **Shuruq Society for Women** to renovate their offices.

In close cooperation with Iraqi nationals and the Coalition Provisional Authority, USAID is restoring critical infrastructure, improving healthcare and education services, expanding economic opportunities, and implementing good governance.

## Women in the Iraq Reconstruction

### Women's Organizations

In Iraq, women and girls often lack the tools and support to become active and equal citizens in a democracy. USAID's Iraq Transition Initiative (ITI) is establishing 12 regional women's centers that offer literacy classes, job skills, information on health care, legal services and a sanctuary from domestic violence. Centers in Diwaniyah, Karbala, Hillah, and Suleimaniyah have opened, centers in Aqrah, Biara, Al Kut, Halabja, Mosul, Najaf, and Tawela have been completed and will open shortly and a second women's center in Hillah will be completed in the near future.

ITI helped create the Baghdad Women's Centers Foundation to form women's centers in each of Baghdad's nine districts. The first center, in the Mansour district, opened on March 8th, 2004 and a second center located in Al Mustansiriya district has been completed and will open shortly.

In Baghdad, USAID's LGP gave books, supplies and equipment to the 9 women's centers. The centers will serve as a meeting place for women as well as a training center to empower women and assist them on the road to financial independence.



Women's Centers offer literacy and job skills classes and information on violence against women and women's rights.



Women preparing for democracy skit

### Women's Rights

ITI has supported women's rights awareness and democracy education through training courses, lectures and the distribution of materials for women that focus on the fundamentals of democracy and principles of human rights. One way that ITI has conducted these activities is through mobile teams that travel to remote areas of Iraq and provide women with health and social services, crisis and abuse intervention, as well as with information on democracy and civic participation. Over 8000 women have access to these services.

### Women's Conferences

ITI supported the Women's Rights Conference in Basrah, the Al Hillah Heartland Women's Conference, and the travel for a national delegation of 14 Iraqi women to the United Nations 48th Annual Commission on the Status of Women Conference in March 2004.

*"I had no skills," nineteen year old Jiwan said, "I know how to sew now, and I would like to teach other women."*

In close cooperation with Iraqi nationals and the Coalition Provisional Authority, USAID is restoring critical infrastructure, improving healthcare and education services, expanding economic opportunities, and implementing good governance.

Source:

[https://infocentral.state.gov/common/doc\\_handler.cfm?item\\_id=7811&CFID=2401417&CFTOKEN=51450063](https://infocentral.state.gov/common/doc_handler.cfm?item_id=7811&CFID=2401417&CFTOKEN=51450063)

## **6. Iraq: Building a New Society. January 6, 2005.**

State Department issues updated fact sheet on Iraq progress

Following is an update of the fact sheet titled, "Iraq: Building a New Society," released by the State Department January 6, 2005:

Bureau of Public Affairs

January 6, 2005

Iraqis, with help from the Coalition and many partners, are rebuilding their country and offering freedom, new opportunities and much needed services to their people. Security problems remain a major challenge for the Iraqi people and for development in various parts of the country. Nevertheless, real progress has been made in many key areas.

### **The road to democratic government**

- Interim Government announced, Governing Council dissolved--June 1
- Election Commission established--June 4
- Transfer of sovereignty to Iraqi Interim Government--June 28
- National Conference convenes and selects Interim National Council--August 15
- National elections for transitional government-- January 30, 2005

### **Infrastructure**



Sweet Water Canal Project, Basrah, Iraq

- Oil revenues for the Iraqi people since June 2003 have been estimated at nearly \$18 billion.
- Access to essential services is being provided without discrimination.
- The port of Umm Qasr has been rehabilitated and reopened to commercial traffic, producing more than \$18 million in tariff revenues, with projections of more than \$24 million this year.
- The Al Mat Bridge in northern Iraq, the Tikrit Bridge in central Iraq, and the Khazir Bridge on the highway between Baghdad and Jordan in western Iraq have been renovated, allowing the delivery of commercial and humanitarian cargo throughout Iraq.
- Water and sanitation projects are underway across Iraq, benefiting 11.8 million residents.
- A new program will clear 20,000 kilometers of Iraq's waterways and employ about 100,000 Iraqis.

### **Security and Stability**



- More than 100,000 law enforcement officers are on duty.
- More than 62,000 Iraqi armed forces, including army, air force, national guard, and coastal defense units, are serving or training.

## Education



USAID funds school bags for all Iraqi secondary students  
Baghdad, Iraq

- Over 2,405 schools have been rehabilitated, 33,000 secondary school teachers trained and 8.7 million textbooks printed and distributed.
- Twenty-five Fulbright grantees and over 20 Iraqi high school students are studying in U.S. educational institutions.
- The first "American Corner" opened in Iraq, including hundreds of books about the U.S., a video and DVD library, Internet connected computers and videoconferencing capabilities.

## Health



- Ground was broken on the first two of 150 new primary health care centers to be built across Iraq.
- Some 110 health clinics have been opened, 2,500 medical staff are being trained, and over 600 medical centers are being equipped.
- Five million children under the age of 5 have been vaccinated against childhood diseases.

## Economic Growth





- The new Iraqi currency is stable and has appreciated against many currencies.
- Small loans for entrepreneurs totaling over \$33 million are available around the country.
- The Iraq Stock Exchange opened in June 2004 including 44 companies with a market capitalization of over \$1.9 billion.
- An Economic Trade zone in the north is being developed, connecting it to the central and southern regions.
- Business training courses are being offered to Iraqi businesspeople.

### Advancing Women



Women's Rights Center Established, Hilla, Iraq

- The Iraqi cabinet includes six women ministers and seven women deputy ministers.
- Twenty-eight women's centers throughout Iraq (22 now open) offer computer and literacy classes, job skills, and access to information about health care and legal services.

### Press

- Iraq has a vibrant and free press—with over 300 newspapers and numerous television and radio outlets.
- Iraq has welcomed the world's press; many media have opened permanent offices.
- Iraqis have access to a variety of information sources allowing the independent formation of opinions and the ability to make crucial decisions about the future.

### Culture

- Cultural preservation activities are underway at the Iraq National Museum and the Iraq National Library.
- An Archaeological Site Protection Plan and stolen artifact list are being developed.
- The Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra performed in the U.S. and had workshops with cellist Yo-Yo Ma.
- Iraqi wrestlers, boxers, and archers received training in the U.S. and participated in the 2004 summer Olympics.
- The Iraqi soccer team, competing in the Olympics for the first time since 1988, qualified for the semi-finals.

## 7. Selected Web Sites.

### U.S. Government:

- U.S. Embassy in Baghdad: <http://iraq.usembassy.gov/>
- Women in Iraq (State Department):
  - Women in Iraq, IIP: [http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle\\_east\\_north\\_africa/iraq/iraq\\_women.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/iraq_women.html)
  - Office of International Women's Issues: <http://www.state.gov/g/wi/>
  - Fact Sheets: [http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle\\_east\\_north\\_africa/iraq/iraq\\_women/iraq\\_women\\_fact.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/iraq_women/iraq_women_fact.html)
- USAID: Assistance for Iraq: <http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/>
  - Support to Iraqi Women: <http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/women.html>



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**March 8, 2006**